

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-10 LAB-06

NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 L-03 NSC-10

PA-04 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 OMB-01

DRC-01 /156 W

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R 151906Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4020

INFO USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY BONN

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E.O 11652 N/A

TAGS: PLAB

SUBJ: RAILS AND PUBLIC SERVICE FEATURES IN CONCERTED CGT/CFDT
STRIKE EFFORT

REF: PARIS 25758

1. SUMMARY. "RENTREE" STRIKE ACTIVITY HAS THUS FAR FAILED
IN POLITICAL PURPOSES: (A) OF DISCOVERING - OR INDUCING -
"MASSIVE DISCONTENT", WHICH IS KEY ELEMENT IN OPPOSITION
RANGE OF OBJECTIVES, AND (B) OF SERIOUSLY TARNISHINGGOF'S
IMAGE AS GOVERNMENT ABLE TO HANDLE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC
ISSUES WITH COMPETENCE AND AUTHORITY. SPECIAL LIP CASE
DISCUSSED IN SEPTEL. EMD SUMMARY.

2. CGT/CFDT ONLY MODERATELY SUCCESSFUL IN LAUNCHING NEW
AUTUMN STRIKES AIMEDAT RECOVERING NATIONWIDE INITIATIVE,
AND AT EMBARRASSING GOVERNMENT DURING POLITICAL "RENTREE".
EFFORT INCLUDED BRIEF OR INTERMITTENT ACTION BY DOCKERS, BANK-
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WORKERS, SUBWAY CREWS, GAS, ELECTRICITY, ATOMIC ENERGY, DEFENSE

AND CONSTRUCTION WORKERS - ALL OF WHOM STRUCK DURING FIRST TWO WEEKS OCTOBER. ALL ACTIONS LED BY CGT/CFDTM TWO MAJOR EFFORTS, HOWEVER, WERE IN RAILS AND PUBLIC SERVICE (REFTEL), BOTH WHICH OFFERED NATIONAL SCOPE AND PLAUSIBLE SET OF GRIEVANCES.

3. RAIL STRIKE IN INITIAL PHASE (OCTOBER 1-4) WAS FAIRLY WELL SUPPORTED BY RANK -AND-FILE; SOMEWHAT LESS SO IN CURRENT PHASE (OCTOBER 10-16) - WITH MAINLINE AND SUBURBAN PASSENGER TRAFFIC AT APPROX 50PERCENT OF NORMAL. CONFRONTED WITH MEAGER RESULTS, AND MINDFUL OF PUBLIC OPINION, UNIONS SUSPENDED STRIKE FOR WEEKEND OCTOBER 13-14 AND LEFT RESUMPTION IN DOUBT. CGT/CFDT DECIDED ON SECOND PHASE FOLLOWING STICK-CARROT MANOEUVRE BY GOVERNMENT WHICH ALTERNATED CHARGE OF ILLEGALITY (IMPROPER NOTIFICATION OF INTENT TO STRIKE) WITH UNILATERAL 1.25PERCENT WAGE INCREASE (CGT/CFDT DEMANDING MIN 4PERCENT). DOUBTFUL, HOWEVER, THAT GOVT WILL GO MUCH BEYOND THIS OFFER, WHICH, WITH COST OF LIVING AND OTHER INCREMENTS ALREADY SCHEDULED, TOTALS 12PERCENT PAY PROGRESSION FOR CALENDAR 1973.

4. PUBLIC SERVICEWORKERS REPRESENTED BY CGT, CFDT, FO AND CGC STAGED 24-HOUR STRIKE OCT 11 IN SUPPORT OF WAGE DEMANDS, GOVERNMENT SOUGHT TO AVERT STRIKE BY OCTOBER 0 DECREE INCREASNG WAGES BY 1.75PERCENT OCT 1 -- THIS ADDITION TO 1.25PERCENT ALREADY DUE UNDER 1973 CONTRACT WHICH, INCIDENTALLY, NOT SIGNED BY CGT AND CFDT. FORCE OUVRIERE, WHICH HAD DEMANDED A 2PERCENT INCREMENT (3.25PERCENT TOTAL), FOUND ITSELF IN AWKWARD POSITION OF APPEARING TO STRIKE FOR 0.25PERCENT AND OF FOLLOWING, INSTEAD OF LEADING, CIVIL SERVICE STRIKE CALLED BY CGT/CFDT.

5. WITH EXCPETION OF GARBAGE COLLECTION AND MAIL DISTRIBUTION SERVICES (EITHER TARDY OR COMPLETELY ABSENT), PUBLIC SERVICE STRIKE ONLY MODERATELY SUCCESSFUL AMONG LOWER PAIDCATEGORIES. APART FROM TWO SERVICES NAMED, GENERAL PUBLIC WAS UNAFFECTED BY STRIKE.

6. COMMENT: BRIEF AND INTERMITTENT INTERRUPTION OF SERVICES HAD THUS FAR GENERATED NO SIGNIFICANT POPULAR PRESSURE OF GOF TO MAKE CONCESSIONS ON SPECIFIC UNION DEMANDS. GOF HAS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RETAINED INITIATIVE AND HAS USED IT EFFECTIVELY - THOUGH NOT AS PROMPTLY AS CIRCUMSTANCES SEEMED TO REQUIRE. DECISION TO GRANT 3 PERCENT TO PUBLIC SERVICE WORKERS, IF TAKEN TWO WEEKS EARLIER, WOULD (ACCORDING TO FO) HAVE PREVENTED FO, CGC PARTICIPATON AND WOULD HAVE EXPOSED POLITICAL MOTIVATION OF CGT/CFDT.

7. LIMITED (NOW WANING) RANK-AND FILE SUPPORT FOR RAIL STRIKE

STEMMED LARGELY FROM TENSIONS CAUSED BY STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN SNCF AS IT SEEKS TO RATIONALIZE OPERATIONS AND PAY ITS OWN WAY. ACTION IN PUBLIC SECTOR - WHERE FO IS SIGNIFICANT POWER-IS UNLIKELY TO CONTINUE ON LARGE SCALE.

8. FO DECISION TO STRIKE OVER OUTSTANDING DIFFERENCE OF 0.25 PERCENT WHICH CAME AS SURPRISE TO MANY, DERIVES FROM INTERNAL UNION PRESSURES, PLUS NECESSITY FOR FO OCCASIONALLY TO SHOW MILITANT FACE. FO SECRETARY GENERAL ANDRE' BERGERON ADMITTED AS MUCH TO LABATT DURING INFORMAL LUNCHEON FOR LABOR REPORTERS ON DAY OF STRIKE. BERGERON ALSO CONCEDED THAT EVEN HE WAS SURPRISED BY GOF'S GENEROUS 3 PERCENT INCREASE- DESPITE TELEPHONE CONVERSATION HE HAD HAD WITH PRIME MINISTER AND SIMILAR MESSAGE HE HAD SENT TO PRESIDENT POMPIDOU URGING 3.25 PERCENT INCREASE. BERGERON ADDED THAT HE IS RELIABLY INFORMED THAT PRESIDENT POMPIDOU HIMSELF DECIDED ON INCREASE, THIS OVERRULING FINANCE MINISTER WHO URGED FOR 2.5 PERCENT INCREASE.

9. TENTATIVE READING OF "RENTREE" ACTION THIS FAR SUGGESTS INSUFFICIENT LEVEL OF RANK-AND-FILE MILITANCY TO CREATE AND SUSTAIN KIND OF SOCIAL TENSION NECESSARY TO TRIGGER CGT SECRETARY GENERAL SEGUY'S "POLITICAL CHANGE WITHOUT AWAITING A DECISIVE ELECTORAL EVENT". BUT CGT/CFDT - WHOSE POLITICAL MOTIVATION HAS BECOME MORE EVIDENT THAN ANY TIME SINCE 1968 - WILL CONTINUE TO SEEK, THOROUGH WELL-CONTROLLED STRIKES AND OTHER FORMS OF AGITATION, TO TARNISH GOVERNMENT'S IMAGE AND TO RAISE QUESTIONS ABOUT ITS COMPETENCE AND AUTHORITY IN THE HANDLING OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES.

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